

## L.A. County Probe Finds No CIA Drug Link

By Jim Newton and Victor Merina  
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LOS ANGELES—An exhaustive, self-critical investigation by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department has uncovered no evidence of CIA involvement in Southern California drug trafficking.

However, the probe found controversial details about the conduct of local narcotics officers, including admissions that one group of sheriff's deputies stole roughly \$50,000 during 1986 raids.

The 3,500-page report represents the first comprehensive law enforcement review of allegations that the CIA and Nicaraguan contra rebels fueled Los Angeles's booming cocaine trade in the 1980s—the premise of a controversial series in the San Jose Mercury News in August.

Specifically, the sheriff's department investigation centered on more than a dozen 1986 drug raids during which one suspect allegedly boasted of ties to the CIA. The search warrant cited confidential informants as saying drug profits were funneled to the contras.

In virtually every respect, however, the sheriff's department concluded

there was no evidence to support these contentions.

Sheriff's investigators determined, among other things, that parts of the 1986 search warrant were fabricated by a key deputy and that the man who reportedly said he was working with the CIA now insists he never made such a statement.

During a news conference Tuesday to unveil the report, Sheriff Sherman Block stressed that investigators found no indication that any government agency, including the CIA, was involved in the Los Angeles activities of Nicaraguan cocaine trafficker Oscar Danilo Blandon or one of his primary customers, Los Angeles crack dealer "Freeway" Ricky Ross.

"The inquiry has not uncovered any evidence that Ricky Ross was used as a pawn to distribute cocaine to specific neighborhoods," Block said, adding that the probe also showed that his department was not "in any way involved in a coverup of any inappropriate activity by any other government agency."

In its report, the sheriff's department demonstrated a willingness to criticize law enforcement officers: Investigators concluded that not only did a deputy falsify search warrant infor-

mation but that deputies stole between \$40,000 and \$63,000 during the subsequent 1986 raids.

"As far as the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department is concerned," Block said, "this case is closed."

However, Rep. Maxine Waters (D-Calif.), who has emerged as a prominent advocate of the allegations by the San Jose newspaper, called the report flawed and incomplete.

"Let me say that without a doubt, I do believe that there is a connection between Danilo Blandon, his drug operation and the CIA, the DEA [Drug Enforcement Administration] and others," said Waters, who recently was chosen to head the Congressional Black Caucus.

"The fact of the matter is that this report raises more questions about the [drug trafficking] operation," she said. Waters said she will raise these issues during congressional hearings.

Danny Bakewell, president of the Brotherhood Crusade, who accompanied Waters to the sheriff's news conference, said he appreciated the sheriff's efforts but predicted the findings will only serve to generate more skepticism.